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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2311

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4829

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2611

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2476

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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3334

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000212

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [KIRF](#) [PK](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN UNICEF DIRECTOR PROPOSES DIRECTION  
FOR PAKISTAN ASSISTANCE

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) On February 6, Charge met with resident UNICEF Director, Abdul Alim, to discuss UNICEF's upcoming five-year country strategy document. In the course of the discussion, Alim, a citizen of Pakistan, turned to his views on the "war for the hearts and minds" of the Islamic world, specifically in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Alim was very well informed on that day's events (the announcement on Manas Airbase and the destruction of a bridge in Khyber pass). Tying the events at least partly to Taliban resurgence in Pakistan, he noted that the Taliban presented a coherent ideology to a people who are largely uneducated in the richness of Islam's multiple schools of thought. Since it is a coherent ideology, those untrained (or not fully trained) in other interpretations are unable to argue against it or to explain where the ideology fails. He asserted that long-standing curbs on information and discrimination against religious minorities in Pakistan are to blame.

¶2. (C) Noting that "a Western economic argument will never overcome an Eastern ideological one," Alim implied that if the U.S. and the West continued to use solely economic incentives without correcting deep structural problems with access to information, especially on alternative interpretations of Islam, Pakistan will continue on its ever more rapid descent into chaos. He claims that, if given the opportunity and greater exposure to constructive, moderate interpretations of Islam, the people of Pakistan will be able to counter the Taliban's extremist ideologies.

¶3. (C) Alim confided that his time in the United States essentially preserved his belief in Islam. He went to the United States to study for his Master's degree, and at that time was on the cusp of abandoning his belief because he could not reconcile the Islam of Pakistan with his internal principles. While in the United States he met representatives of the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, which he characterized as reinterpreting Islam to not only allow, but to encourage secularism in the operations of the state, standing orthodox views on their head. Alim found much appeal in this school of thought, and presented the Charge with books about the sect that he claimed "you cannot find in Pakistan since they are banned there."

¶4. (C) Without specifying that it was directed against his co-religionists, Alim noted that Pakistan has a dual-constituency system instituted by Zia ul-Haq that provides voters a different slate of candidates based on whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim (NOTE: ul-Haq ushered through a constitutional amendment that specifically denoted the Ahmadiyya as "non-Muslim." END NOTE.). Alim further explained that Pakistan, by enshrining this distinction into its constitution, became a de facto theocratic state, directly in contradiction to the state wishes of Pakistan's founder, Jinnah. Alim suggested that the United States should condition aid to Pakistan on reversing the deeply-entrenched sectarian divide and not settle for cosmetic changes as in the past.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: Alim's agenda, of course, is to see Ahmadiyya Islam reintroduced to Pakistan. He firmly believes it will appeal to broad segments of the population and is convinced that once the highly intellectual Pakistanis are exposed to this, and other interpretations, they will be able to beat back more Islamist interpretations such as those of the Salafis, Taliban and others. In any case, the Charge reiterated for him the U.S. position on promotion of religious freedom, access to information and minorities, rights around the world. END COMMENT.

MILES